



U.S. Department of Justice

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MEDIA RELEASE
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PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS

MANCHESTER MAN PLEADS GUILTY FIREARM POSSESSION

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE - United States Attorney Tom Colantuono, Special Agent In Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Boston Field Office Kenneth W. Kaiser, and Manchester Police Chief John Jaskolka, today announced that Todd Bernatchez, 34, of Manchester, New Hampshire, pleaded guilty in the United States District Court, Concord, New Hampshire, to one count of possessing firearms while being an unlawful user of controlled drugs.

A sentencing hearing is scheduled for December 1, 2005 at 2:30 p.m. Bernatchez faces a statutory maximum sentence of 10 years on the charge. However, under the advisory sentencing guidelines, Bernatchez's sentence is likely to be less than 10 years.

Bernatchez pleaded guilty to possessing firearms while being addicted to and a user of cocaine and marijuana. Under federal law, persons who are unlawful users of or addicted to controlled substances are prohibited from possessing any firearm.

U.S. Attorney Colantuono stated: "The Department of Justice's Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative is dedicated to investigating and prosecuting those individuals who illegally possess firearms. Persons who are unlawful users or who are addicted to controlled substances pose a high risk to the safety of the public as a result of their addiction. Combining the unpredictable behavior of drug addicts with firearms can lead to deadly consequences. Accordingly, we are determined to prosecute those who possess firearms while addicted to drugs."

The case was investigated by the Manchester Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Donald Feith.